

Community Service Requirement: Sample Policy

Revised 4/20/05

In August 2004, Governor Jennifer Granholm asked the Michigan Merit Award Board to consider expanding the eligibility requirements to earn a Michigan Merit Award. After careful consideration, the Board adopted Resolution 2004-1, requiring students who qualify for a Michigan Merit Award to also complete at least 40 hours of community service by June 30 of their graduation year. The resolution allows local school districts to develop a community service that best serves the needs of their community while satisfying the 40-hour requirement.

The following sample policy demonstrates community service activities that would meet the requirement. School districts may eliminate any of the suggested activities as appropriate for their community, or add suggested activities that meet the overall requirement of voluntary, uncompensated service and charitable purposes. Schools may also find it helpful to search the Internet under “high school community service policy” or similar search criteria for examples of programs and policies from high schools across the country.

To ensure that students eligible for a Michigan Merit Award receive timely payment of their award, both the school and the student must verify that the student completed the 40-hour community service requirement. Prior to beginning their first year of college, each potential recipient of a Michigan Merit Award (Class of 2006 and after) will receive notification from the Michigan Merit Award office regarding their eligibility.

- **STUDENT** - Among other questions related to eligibility, the student will be asked, “Did you complete 40 hours of community service prior to graduation?” The student will answer yes or no.
- **SCHOOL** - The Michigan Merit Award periodically asks each high school to verify certain information about graduating seniors (correct spelling of student’s name, verification of graduation year, etc.). This information is collected through the Michigan Merit Award Status List, a paper report mailed to each high school’s Guidance Office after each MEAP testing session. Beginning with the Class of 2006, the Status List will include a column for the school to verify that the student performed 40 hours of community service. The column will ask, “Did the student complete 40 hours of community service?” The school will simply check yes or no.
- **THIRD-PARTY** - In cases where the school did not establish a policy, or if the student disagrees with the school’s failure or refusal to make certification of compliance for the student, the Michigan Merit Award Board will make available a form by which the student may submit a third-party certification form (available for download from the Internet) directly to the Michigan Merit Award office, signed by the adult who supervised the student’s community service performance. The third-party supervisor may not be related to the student.

EXCEPTIONS - There are no exceptions to the 40-hour voluntary community service requirement if an eligible student wishes to earn a Michigan Merit Award, nor shall the 40-hour requirement be proportionately lessened for the Class of 2006, 2007, etc.

SAMPLE POLICY

(*High school or District name here*) hereby establishes this Community Service Policy for its high school students who wish to earn a Michigan Merit Award, consistent with Michigan Merit Award Board Resolution 2004-1.

TIMEFRAME - Commencing anytime after the last day of a student's 8th grade year in school, but no later than June 30 of the year in which the student graduates from high school, the student is encouraged to perform no less than 40 hours of community service for a person(s) not related to the student, or for an organization engaged in community service. Such service need not be performed in a concentrated block of time, but may be spread out over the student's entire high school career. Students are encouraged to begin their community service early in their high school career in order to complete the 40 hours of service by June 30 of their graduation year.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES - Eligible activities must be separate from regular extracurricular activities (athletics, band, choir, etc.). The student must render aid or perform volunteer service that directly benefits at least one other unrelated person, and for which the student does not receive monetary compensation. Eligible activities include but are not limited to:

- Reading to children in the elementary grades
- Tutoring a fellow student or younger student
- Mentoring younger children
- Participating in activities that encourage middle school children to prepare for college
- Volunteering at a hospital, nursing home, etc.
- "Service Learning" (community service for which academic credit is earned)
- Service performed as a requirement for membership in National Honor Society or similar organization
- Serving others in a manner not associated with a community service organization (e.g., helping an elderly neighbor not related to the student do grocery shopping each week, etc.)
- Working with a church group to build a shelter for residents of an impoverished community, either locally or in some other state or country
- Performing with the school band or choir at a local retirement center for which no admission fee is charged and whose sole purpose is to entertain the elderly
- Planning and participating in a bake sale, car wash or similar activity with fellow students to raise money for a local charity

ELIGIBILITY - Students are encouraged to consult with (*designated school official's name here*) about the eligibility of an activity not listed above.

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS - Many community service organizations welcome the voluntary service of a high school student. Such organizations include but are not limited to AmeriCorps, Habitat for Humanity, Hospice, Meals on Wheels, and United Way. Local hospitals, faith-based organizations and other local volunteer organizations routinely welcome student volunteers. Students seeking a community service organization for which they may perform community service are encouraged to contact (*designated school official's name here*) or the Volunteer Centers of Michigan (phone 517/492-2430) for a list of local charitable organizations.

RECORD KEEPING - The school will develop a form by which students may track and report to the school the date, nature, and number of community service hours performed. The school will use this information to respond to the Michigan Merit Award Office when asked to verify community service hours performed by students.

DISCLAIMER - *(High school or District name here)* may, at its discretion and at any time, modify this policy as long as it continues to meet the requirements of Michigan Merit Award Board Resolution 2004-1.

For information or questions regarding this policy, contact *(designated school official's name here)* at *(phone)*. Students are also encouraged to review the Frequently Asked Questions document developed by the Michigan Merit Award Office, a copy of which is available in the high school's Guidance Office.